



## *Smog Check Financial Assistance Programs*

MAY 1998

If a vehicle fails a Smog Check inspection and the owner cannot afford to make emissions-related repairs, the Department of Consumer Affairs/Bureau of Automotive Repair (DCA/BAR) offers programs to provide temporary financial relief—the **Repair Cost Waiver** and the **Economic Hardship Extension**. In addition, a **Repair Assistance Program** is currently being developed to assist low-income motorists with emissions-related repairs.

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### **Repair Cost Waiver**

The two-year waiver allows a vehicle to be registered without passing its Smog Check inspection, as long as the vehicle owner first makes some emissions-related repairs to the vehicle at a licensed test and repair station. The amount that must be spent on emissions-related repairs to be eligible for the waiver differs depending on the area in which the vehicle is registered. In most Enhanced Areas, a sliding scale determines the amount to be spent. In all other areas, the amount to be spent is \$450. However, beginning in 1998, the amount required to be spent to qualify for the waiver will be \$450 throughout the state.

After emissions-related repairs have been performed, the motorist must take the vehicle and any repair invoices to a Referee Center where the vehicle may be inspected. Once the Referee determines that the vehicle meets the criteria, the Referee will issue a waiver. The vehicle can then be registered, and the owner has up to two years to make additional repairs to bring the vehicle into compliance with emissions standards. The Repair Cost Waiver can only be used once by an owner during his or her ownership of a vehicle and may not be used if an Economic Hardship Extension was issued in the previous Smog Check inspection (some motorists who received a waiver or extension prior to January 1, 1998, may still qualify).

### **Economic Hardship Extension**

In areas of the state where the \$450 waiver is in effect, an Economic Hardship Extension is available to low-income vehicle owners who cannot afford emissions-related repairs. Like the Repair Cost Waiver, it allows a vehicle to be registered immediately without passing its Smog Check inspection and gives a vehicle owner up to two years to complete the repairs needed to bring the vehicle into compliance with emissions standards. To obtain an extension, a vehicle must be brought to a Referee Center where tests may be performed.

The Economic Hardship Extension may only be used once by an owner during his or her ownership of a vehicle and may not be used if a Repair Cost Waiver was issued in the previous Smog Check inspection (some motorists who received a waiver or extension prior to January 1, 1998, may still qualify).

#### ***Repair Cost Waiver Sliding Scale Cost Limit***

<i>YEAR</i>	<i>COST</i>
<i>1974-1975</i>	<i>\$90</i>
<i>1976-1979</i>	<i>\$125</i>
<i>1980-1989</i>	<i>\$175</i>
<i>1990 or Newer</i>	<i>\$300</i>

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Starting in 1998, DCA/BAR will begin to require that low-income motorists verify their economic status—defined as being within 175% of the federal poverty level (about \$27,000 annually for a family of four) to receive an Economic Hardship Extension. A motorist receiving this extension will have to obtain an estimate from a licensed test-and repair station stating that emissions-related repairs to the vehicle would exceed \$250. Repairs costing less than \$250 must be made.

**Low Income Repair Assistance Program**

Recent legislation allows the Bureau of Automotive Repair to design a Repair Assistance Program for low-income motorists. Up to \$450 may be offered by DCA/BAR to help low-income motorists make emissions-related repairs to their vehicles. To qualify, the motorist must make a \$250 co-payment and have all repairs performed at selected Gold Shield Guaranteed Repair Stations.

Funding for the program will come from existing fees assessed on out-of-state vehicles being initially registered in California.

**Exceptions**

The Repair Cost Waiver, Economic Hardship Extension, and Repair Assistance are not available if the vehicle:

- has missing, modified, or disconnected emissions control equipment;
- is being initially registered in the state (e.g., imports, engine changes, and dismantled, alternate fueled, and specially constructed vehicles); or
- is being sold.

Vehicles with missing, modified, or disconnected emissions equipment must have the equipment replaced or reconnected before being eligible for the Repair Cost Waiver, Economic Hardship Extension, or Repair Assistance Program.

**Referee Appointments**

To obtain either a Repair Cost Waiver or an Economic Hardship Extension, a motorist must make an appointment to visit a Referee Center. A fee is charged if an inspection is required. To make an appointment, call toll-free at 1-800-622-7733.

**Emphasis on Repairs**

The Smog Check program emphasizes the need for emissions-related repairs on vehicles that fail their inspections but accommodates those who cannot afford repairs. It also encourages motorists to perform regular maintenance on their vehicles. The focus of the Smog Check program is to identify and repair the worst polluting vehicles in California. Repairing these vehicles will significantly improve California's air quality, help the state meet its clean air goals, and allow all Californians to breathe cleaner, healthier air.